

THE AUTHENTICITY OF 1 JOHN 5:7

Updated August 25, 2003 (first published November 3, 1996) (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org; for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article) -

The following is excerpted from *A Critique of D.A. Carson's The King James Version Debate* by Thomas Strouse, 1980, Emmanuel Baptist Theological Seminary, 296 New Britain Ave., Newington, CT 06111, 860-666-1055 --

The specific passage that Carson attempts to repudiate is the Johannine Comma (1 John 5:7,8). He lists some "hand-me-down" arguments against the inclusion of the passage in question. For instance, he states that "it is found in precisely four Greek manuscripts" (p. 60). Does he really have the final count of the MS evidence for the Johannine Comma? To answer this question and other related questions to the authenticity of the Johannine Comma, several considerations need to be advanced.

The first consideration is **THE THEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT**. The strength of forgery or interpolation is similarity and not uniqueness. The Trinitarian formula, "Father, Word, and Holy Spirit" is unique not only for John but for all NT writers. The usual formula, "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" would have been assuredly used by a forger. [Incidentally, this argument is an antidote for rationalists who repudiate the authenticity of the Petrine authorship of 2 Peter. Peter uses a unique spelling for his name (*Sumeon*), which is also the first word of the Epistle, to demonstrate his mark of authorship. What forger would pass three dollar bills? Only the authority, the government, would attempt such a unique action.]

The second consideration is **THE GRAMMATICAL ARGUMENT**. The omission of the Johannine Comma leaves much to be desired grammatically. The words "Spirit," "water" and "blood" are all neuters, yet they are treated as masculine in verse 8. This is strange if the Johannine Comma is omitted, but it can be accounted for if it is retained; the masculine nouns "Father" and "word" in verse 7 regulate the gender in the succeeding verse due to the power of attraction principle. The argument that the "Spirit" is personalized and therefore masculine is offset by verse 6 which is definitely referring to the personal Holy Spirit yet using the neuter gender. [I.H. Marshall is a current voice for this weak argument: "It is striking that although Spirit, water, and blood are all neuter nouns in Greek, they are introduced by a clause expressed in the masculine plural ... Here in I John he clearly regards the Spirit as personal, and this leads to the personification of the water and the blood." *The Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1978), p. 237n.] Moreover, the words "that one" (to hen) in verse 8 have no antecedent if verse 7 is omitted, [Marshall calls this construction "unparalleled," p. 237] whereas if verse 7 is retained, then the antecedent is "these three are one" (to hen).

The third consideration is **THE MANUSCRIPT ARGUMENT**. Carson states that there are only four MSS that contain this reading. He is wrong about the facts. The current UBSNT lists six MSS (61, 88mg, 429mg, 629, 636mg, and 918) containing the "Comma." Moreover, D.A. Waite cites evidence of some twenty MSS containing it (those confirmed are 61, 88mg, 629, 634mg, 636mg, omega 110, 429mg, 221, and 2318) along with two lectionaries (60, 173) and four fathers (Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, and Jerome). ["I John 5.7," *The Dean Burgon News* 5 (1979); 1.]

This evidence is ample to argue for the retention of the Johannine Comma. Incidentally, some verses in the UBSNT have been retained on far less evidence than this. The whole issue at hand concerning the "Comma" is this: did the orthodox interpolate the verse in the text, or did the heretics expunge the verse from the text? Acknowledging the evidence, the most Christ-honoring approach is the latter (Thomas Strouse, *A Critique of D.A. Carson's The King James Version Debate*, 1980).

AN ADDITIONAL ARGUMENT FROM THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THOSE TIMES

The following is excerpted from Robert Lewis Dabney, "The Doctrinal Various Readings of the New Testament Greek," *Discussions: Evangelical and Theological*, Vol. 1, 1891, p. 350-390 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1891, reprinted 1967). This first appeared in the Southern Presbyterian Review, April 1871:

"We must also consider the time and circumstances in which the passage was written. John tells his spiritual children that his object is to warn them against seducers (2.26), whose heresy was a denial of the proper Sonship and incarnation (4.2) of Jesus Christ. We know that these heretics were Corinthians and Nicolaitanes. Irenaeus and other early writers tell us that they all vitiated the doctrine of the Trinity. Cerinthus taught that Jesus was not miraculously born of a virgin, and that the Word, Christ, was not truly and eternally divine, but a sort of angelic 'Aion' associated with the natural man Jesus up to his crucifixion. The Nicolaitanes denied that the 'Aion' Christ had a real body, and ascribed to him only a phantasmal body and blood. It is against these errors that John is fortifying his "children" and this is the very point of the disputed 7th verse. If it stands, then the whole passage is framed to exclude both heresies. In verse 7 he refutes the Corinthian by declaring the unity of Father, Word and Spirit, and with the strictest accuracy employing the neuter HEN EISIN to fix the point which Cerinthus denied--the unity of the Three Persons in One common substance. He then refutes the Nicolaitanes by declaring the proper humanity of Jesus, and the actual shedding, and application by the Spirit, of that water and blood of which he testifies as on eyewitness in the Gospel.

"John thus warns his spiritual 'children' against 'seducers' who taught error regarding the true divine Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ and regarding His incarnation and true humanity, and when we further see John precisely expose these errors in verses 7 and 8 of Chapter 5, we are constrained to acknowledge that there is a coherency in the whole passage which presents strong internal evidence for the genuineness of the 'Received Text.'"

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